

## Strategies for Reviewing and Revising Rubrics

*R.J. Stiggins, J.A. Arter, J. Chappuis, and S. Chappuis*

---

### Explanation and Considerations for Use

This tool describes a process and instructions for teachers and/or other school staff to use to refine the rubrics they are using to review exhibitions.

This tool was created and/or compiled by The Rhode Island Department of Education and The Education Alliance at Brown University, with the generous support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/highschoolreform/dslat/>  
October, 2005



### **Strategies for Reviewing and Revising Rubrics**

The first step in rubric development often draws from “theoretical” or abstract sources: teachers’ prior knowledge about quality performance on a task, state standards or curricula, research on learning or assessment, sample rubrics developed in other contexts, etc. Using these sources, rubric developers typically develop an initial rubric that consists of an organized list of the features of student performance at different levels of performance.

However, this version of a rubric should be considered the first draft. Using samples of actual student work (e.g., exhibitions students complete prior to the Graduation Exhibition), the following process can be used to greatly improve the quality and usefulness of a rubric:

1. Gather samples of student work (i.e., exhibitions completed by students in their coursework)
2. Sort sample exhibitions by level of quality
3. Group the features of levels of student work into traits
4. Identify sample exhibitions that illustrate each level
5. Revise your rubric (Stiggins et al., 2004)

This process is described in more detail below:

#### Gather Samples of Student Work

The Required Elements for Graduation Exhibitions include the following:

“Student completion of an exhibition for graduation by proficiency purposes should be a multi-step process with multiple opportunities to learn and demonstrate exhibition components throughout the high school experience, across disciplines, and prior to the culminating exhibition for graduation by proficiency purposes.”

Prior to the implementation of official Graduation Exhibitions in 2008, students should have multiple opportunities to deliver exhibitions in their coursework. Teachers should videotape as many of these “practice” exhibitions as possible. This will result in a sample of exhibition-related student work that will be extremely useful for refining and revising Graduation Exhibition rubrics that are currently in draft form.

#### Sort Sample Exhibitions by Level of Quality

The next step is to sort the sample exhibitions according to level of quality. Ideally, these levels of quality should correspond to rubric levels that will be used to judge official Graduation Exhibitions (e.g. Proficient, Mid-Range, Emergent or Exceeds Standard, Meets Standard, Approaching Standard), even if this was not the goal of the classroom exercise that produced the sample exhibitions. Without looking at the scores that may

## Exhibition Toolkit | Pilot Exhibition Assessment Process | Review and Revise Processes and Materials

have been previously assigned to these sample exhibitions, teachers should categorize the exhibitions.

Once sample exhibitions have been categorized, teachers should study the samples to determine the characteristics that separate one level of quality from the next. They should write down their reasons for placing samples in one category or another and list detailed descriptors of exhibitions at the different levels of quality. As much as possible, general descriptors such as “lacks fluency” should be replaced by detailed descriptors such as “speaks slowly with hesitation” (Stiggins et al, 2004).

### Group the Features of Levels of Student Work into Traits

At this point, you will find that your long list of descriptors contains many terms that are redundant or overlapping. This is the time to eliminate or consolidate redundant descriptors. At the same time, this is the step where teachers should look at the entire list of descriptors to identify broad dimensions of performance (or traits) that emerge out of the descriptor list. These may be the same traits that were in your original draft rubric, or they may be new traits that were not evident until actual sample exhibitions were examined.

### Identify Sample Exhibitions that Illustrate Each Level

Return to the sample exhibitions that were grouped according to levels of quality, and identify those exhibitions that illustrate particularly well the performance levels and traits you have identified. These sample exhibitions can then serve as *models*, *exemplars*, *examples*, *anchors*, or *benchmarks* and can be used for professional development in the school and for exhibition judge training sessions.

### Revise Your Rubric

Using the traits identified in previous steps of the rubric revision process, add, delete, or merge traits into the original, draft rubric. Use the descriptors that emerged from this process to refine or add to the descriptors that appear in the original rubric, as well. It is also important to examine the rubric for parallel content, to ensure that descriptors at one performance level are represented at the other levels, too.

While time-consuming, the rubric revision process described above will result in a vastly improved rubric that is clearer and easier for students, teachers, and exhibition judges to use and understand. The dialogue and analysis inherent in this process will also help participating teachers increase the consistency of their assessment of student exhibitions over time, students, and courses.

Source: Stiggins, R.J., Arter, J.A., Chappuis, J. and Chappuis, S. (2004). *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well*. Portland, OR: Assessment Training Institute, Inc.